



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

To help strengthen our ties with Mexico, Governor Napolitano led a delegation of state officials to Mexico City to meet the newly-elected Mexican President, Felipe de Jesús Calderón as well as other Mexican government officials. As part of Governor Napolitano's delegation, I had the opportunity to meet with officials from Aeromexico and Mexicana. Both of these airlines recently announced new nonstop service between Phoenix and Mexico City. This is essential to helping us increase our tourist numbers from Mexico because there is a direct correlation between nonstop air service between Arizona and Mexico and the number of overnight visitors Arizona receives from our southern neighbor. Over the last several years, air service from Mexico to Arizona has fluctuated between one and three flights per day and we have found a noticeable increase in visitation when more air service from Mexico has been offered. The goal of meeting with these airlines is to show support from the State of Arizona and work on initiatives that are mutually beneficial for both organizations and that will fill seats on the planes.

Arizona and Mexico have always had strong ties and we look forward to building on that existing foundation to strengthen the economic relationships that can benefit us all.

Have a great week.

Margie A. Emmert

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

Teamwork for Effective Arizona Marketing (TEAM) FY 2008 Certification Workshops – SAVE the DATE

The Arizona Office of Tourism is pleased to present our FY 2008 Teamwork for Effective Arizona Marketing (TEAM) Certification workshops. TEAM workshops are designed to provide comprehensive information on AOT's matching grant program and the applications process. To further assist communities and organization with their tourism planning and development, this year's workshop will also include information on how to develop a marketing plan. AOT offers the opportunity to attend a workshop in one of five Arizona communities: Phoenix, Sierra Vista, Kingman, Flagstaff, and Show Low. Workshop attendance is mandatory for those organizations who wish to apply for matching grant funding for FY 2008. To RSVP for a workshop, please contact Sarah Martins at 602-364-3687 or via email at smartins@azot.gov. Please see below dates and locations, more information to follow.

Phoenix
Tuesday, February 13, 2007
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Sierra Vista
Thursday, February 15, 2007
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Kingman
Tuesday, February 20, 2007
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Flagstaff
Thursday, February 22, 2007
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Show Low
Tuesday, February 27, 2007
12 p.m. – 2 p.m.

Trippin' with AOT

American Bus Association Annual Marketplace

AOT recently participated in the Annual Marketplace for the American Bus Association (ABA) in Grapevine, Texas, Jan. 27 – Feb. 1, 2007. ABA's Marketplace is an annual event to network and enhance your group travel business. The core of Marketplace week is the face-to-face, seven-minute prescheduled appointments, where motorcoach and tour operators obtain destination information and create business relationships with destinations, hotels, attractions, and many other travel industry services throughout North America. For AOT, these pre-scheduled requests resulted in 46 one-on-one appointments. Other DMOs and suppliers from around Arizona also attended obtaining leads for business for their regions. Also featured are educational seminars that run concurrently throughout the week to hone personal and professional skills as well as obtain credits towards professional certification and Foundation fundraising events, making this a tremendous, week-long networking opportunity for Arizona. More than 3000 delegates attended Marketplace, and more than 650 of those were tour operators resulting in more appointments and networking than past Marketplaces. Arizona was represented by more than 20 local suppliers and DMOs, the largest Arizona delegation to date at ABA. In addition to the ABA event, AOT, the Greater Phoenix CVB, Tucson CVB and Flagstaff CVB visited the Hotels.com call center in Arlington, Texas to distribute Arizona literature to 80 sales and client service representatives. For more information about the ABA Marketplace event, please contact Jennifer Sutcliffe at 602-364-3693 or via email at jsutcliffe@azot.gov.

Industry News

Bush Seeks Boost in Funding for National Parks

National parks would be a big winner under President Bush's 2008 budget, and a plan to match up to \$100 million in private donations could guarantee increases for a decade. Bush's budget, being unveiled today, would give the National Park Service \$2.4 billion next year, USA Today reports. That includes a \$258 million increase for daily operations, up 14.5 percent. The president proposes adding at least \$100 million a year for the next 10 years. The funds would be used to hire 3,000 seasonal park rangers, guides and maintenance workers each summer, an increase of more than 50 percent. (*Page 4A, USA Today*)

Travel Agents Preparing for Spring Break

Travel Agents say reservations for spring break vacations are well ahead of those last year at this time, with the usual ski resorts and beach destinations filling up fast. Carlson Wagonlit Travel agencies are reporting increases of 10 percent to 50 percent in bookings for late February to mid-April travel; some travelers reserved as early as November. Online travel agencies like Travelocity.com and Expedia.com are also experiencing an early-booking trend. Hotels say the new passport rules—requiring passports for Americans traveling by air between the U.S. and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean and Bermuda—aren't dampening demand. (*Sect. 5, Page 6, New York Times*)

Bush Budget Shifts Aviation Taxes from Tickets

The Bush administration unveiled plans Monday to increase taxes on business and private aircraft, a dramatic shift in how the government funds aviation that could reduce the portion that airline passengers pay. Airlines lobbied heavily for the change, arguing that the current tax on airline tickets unfairly penalizes passengers while the rapidly growing number of private and corporate jets don't pay their fare share. The president's fiscal 2008 budget would eliminate the ticket tax on commercial airlines fares in October 2008 in favor of a system in which airlines pay fees to the government, based on their use of the air traffic control system. The proposal won the support of the Air Transport Association. *(Page 1B, USA Today; Travel Weekly.com; PR Newswire)*

Bill Would Call for Easing Passport Rule

A U.S. legislator wants to force officials to fully consider allowing Americans and Canadians to use driver's licenses in lieu of passports to cross the border and exempt everyone under 17 from the new security rule. Draft legislation obtained by The Canadian Press commits the U.S. to a pilot project with licenses. It also ensures officials use the extra time Congress gave them, until June 1, 2009, to review the passport rule and ensure it won't cause havoc at land and sea crossings. The bill, proposed by New York Democrat Louise Slaughter who chairs the powerful House Rules Committee, will be introduced as early as next week with Republican backers. Slaughter, whose district includes Buffalo and Niagara Falls, N.Y., has long backed Canada's concern the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative will seriously harm tourism and trade. *(Canada.com)*

FAA Issues New Standards for Air Tours

The government announced new safety standards Thursday for air tour companies that operate at many scenic vacation spots and for pilots who offer rides at air shows. The FAA also promised to keep closer track of deaths and other accidents involving air tours. The safety rule, which takes effect in six months, "will increase overall air tour safety, improve the FAA's ability to track and monitor commercial air tour flights and help us to identify and address operations trends that could lead to accidents," said the agency's head, Marion Blakey. Safety investigators have looked into 107 accidents that killed 98 people between 1988 and 1995. *(AP; Chicago Tribune.com; Honolulu Advertiser.com; Las Vegas Review-Journal.com/Business; Page 3A, USA Today)*

Survey Shows Growth of Youth Group Travel

A majority of 12- to 18-year-old travelers in the U.S. take at least one significant group trip each year without parents, spending almost \$10 billion a year. The results are from a recent survey by the Student and Youth Travel Research Institute at Michigan State University, which conducts research on student and youth travel in North America. The results were based on a preliminary survey of more than 300 U.S. households with children between the ages of 12 to 18 and covers the year 2005. The survey found that more than 60 percent of respondents indicated that the 12-to-18-year-olds in their households had taken an overnight group trip in 2005, spending an average of \$417. *(Modern Agent.com, 2/8)*

